

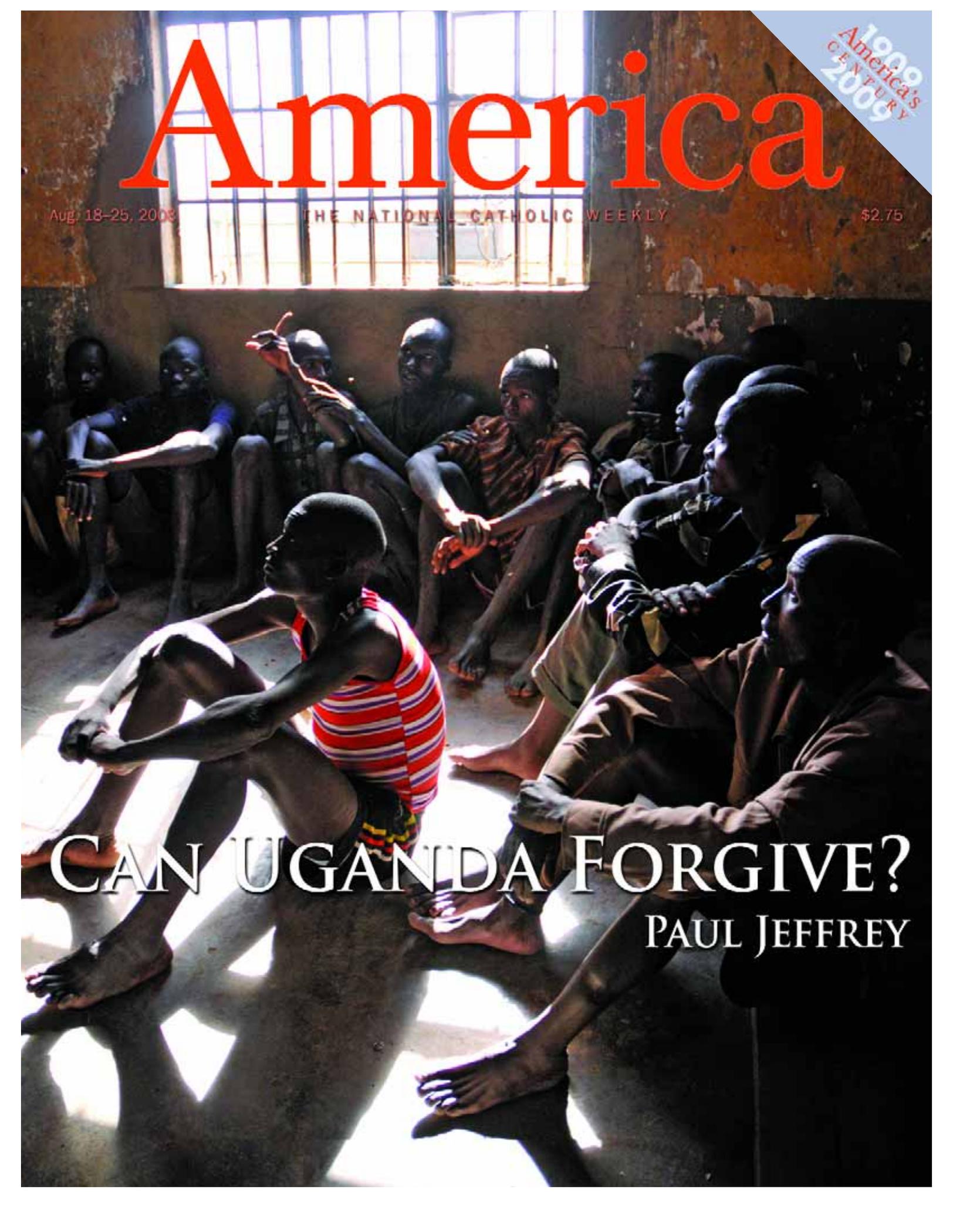
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CAN UGANDA FORGIVE?

PAUL JEFFREY

EARTHQUAKE! Southern California experienced a hefty one on July 29, and rattled residents of Los Angeles were once again the subject of somewhat frenzied coverage from news outlets around the nation for the next 48 hours. As always happens, the phone lines were overwhelmed, but through the wonders of the Internet I established contact from New York with my parents and siblings in and around Los Angeles, only to discover it was just a 5.4 magnitude quake on the Richter scale. Since there is a 99 percent chance of California experiencing an earthquake even more devastating than San Francisco's 1989 World Series earthquake (a short but destructive 6.9) or Los Angeles's 1994 Northridge temblor (a long and terrifying 6.7) in the next 30 years, a 5.4 is more a cause for shoulder-shrugging than panic in the Golden State.

Earthquakes are such a constant companion of Californians that they can be the subject of humor and nostalgia as

much as terror; there's even a minor league baseball team outside Los Angeles called the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes, and more than a few businesses incorporate "seismic" in their names as a rather curious badge of honor.

During a freelance writing job I had at a southern California university many moons ago, I worked with a number of consultants from the East Coast, and was fascinated by the difference between East Coasters and Californians in their choice of metaphors. Those born and raised in Los Angeles (there are a few of us) can be baffled by language that incorporates images and experiences common to East Coast urbanites, and two frequent metaphors used in our working sessions caused me some cognitive dissonance: "We want to avoid the third rail of politics here" and "Let's take this conversation to the 46th floor." I was well into my 20s before I even knew what a "third rail" on a subway track was, never mind that one should avoid it (apparently it electrocutes you). The second image, I finally reminded my co-workers, made little sense on a campus where the tallest building barely broke four stories. Who in their right mind would want to be on the 46th floor when The

Big One hits? Instead, we prefer our proposals earthshaking and seek to avoid emotional aftershocks.

There are many other urban conglomerations on this earth where natural forces periodically remind residents that they are living on borrowed time, and in my experience that knowledge does something to a city's residents. People live faster, play harder and care a little less for history but much more for the Next Big Thing, because the next day might well be the last one. Norman Klein wrote a revealing book on the subject back in 1997 called *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*, on Southern California's love of the new instead of confrontation with reality, and Mike Davis followed two years later with *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*.

Mexico City, Tokyo, New Orleans and countless others—all are places

where one can see the evidence firsthand that we are but temporarily

enjoying Mother Nature's good favor. Years ago I spent a week in a cheap hotel in Naples, Italy, where a glance out the window showed Mount Vesuvius glowering down at the oft-rebuilt city to its west, steam periodically hissing from sulphurous vents on its lower slopes. Suddenly I was able to make more sense of the absolute human chaos on the streets below me (and, these days, the piles of garbage). The three million Neapolitans settled around Vesuvius know at some level that eventually the volcano will reawaken. Everything must be built and run on the presupposition it will one day soon fall down, be buried or be burned in Naples and everywhere else where humans live their lives with a natural sword of Damocles dangling overhead.

"There is no remembrance of former things," says Qoheleth in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after." Tomorrow might be The Big One, in Los Angeles or somewhere else, but in the meantime the sun will be out and the ocean breeze will be blowing, and an act of God is an act of God, after all. Best not to worry.

James T. Keane, S.J.

Of Many Things

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Cover photo Karamojong warriors captured by the Ugandan army sit in a cell northeast of Kampala May 21, 2008. Reuters/James Akena (UGANDA)



Articles

Hope for Uganda 10
Paul Jeffrey

In the wake of violence, a campaign for forgiveness

A Church Reborn 15
Bryan Lindenberger

Teens restore a beacon of faith for an ailing community by restoring its 19th-century church.

Current Comment 4

Editorial Iran and the Bomb 5

Signs of the Times 6

Ethics Notebook 9

Dear Senator Obama *John F. Kavanaugh*

From Our Pages: 1963 17

Why Some Look Up to Planets and Heroes
Thomas Merton

Faith in Focus 19

Mercy Toward Our Fathers *Camille D'Arienzo*

Poem Art Auction for Charity at a
Civil War Re-enactment *Michael Colonnese* 20

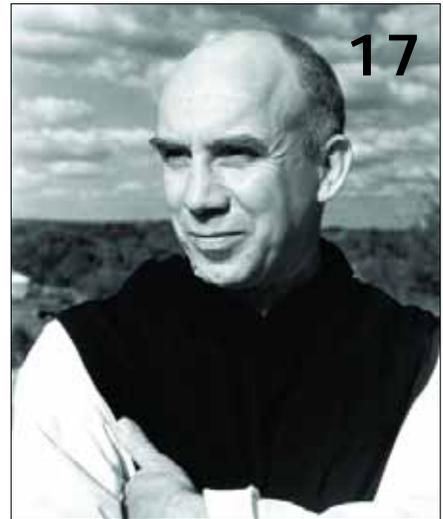
Book Reviews 22

Jesus and the Emergence of a Catholic Imagination;
A Crime So Monstrous; Say You're One of Them;
A Step From Death

Letters 29

The Word 30

Peter the Rock; The Cross, Our Identity and Hope
Daniel J. Harrington



This week @
America Connects

From the archives, Richard A. McCormick S.J., on the 25th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*. Plus, an audio interview with Camille D'Arienzo, R.S.M., and a slideshow of the restored Our Lady of Purification Church. All at americamagazine.org.

China's Showcase

Many Americans remember a time when the Olympic Games were a source of international controversy and political statements, including the U.S. boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics (to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) and the Soviets' retaliatory boycott of the 1984 Games in Los Angeles. In recent decades, however, most nations have left behind political causes and embraced the Olympics as a truly international celebration of athletic competition by the community of nations. The Beijing Games this month have tested that spirit of worldwide cooperation, not least because China remains among the world's more oppressive regimes with regard to human rights, freedom of information and religious liberty.

The Chinese government has gone to great lengths to make these Olympics a showcase for the "new China," celebrating the nation's rise from an impoverished agricultural country to a vibrant and increasingly influential world power. The medal count will likely reflect China's serious investment in that ancient source of national pride: the strength and valor of a nation's athletes. The Chinese people, as many foreign visitors to China will testify, possess something akin to the American article of faith: that every nation on earth would profit by embracing their culture and way of life. And as the 20th century was the American century, so many believe the 21st will be the Chinese century. The Olympic Games of 2008 will give the world a chance to see what this might be like, as China's problems and promise will be on very public display.

A-Bombs and Repentance

On Aug. 6 and 9 we remembered—and mourned—the 63rd anniversary of the dropping of atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These bombings, which resulted in over 200,000 deaths, constituted an intentional killing of civilians, which is in violation of the laws of armed conflict. Since 1945 these bombings have often been defended as morally legitimate; some have claimed that an abrupt end to the war "saved a million American lives." This utilitarian calculation, however, finds no support in Catholic moral theology. As the Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" teaches: "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God

and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation." It is always wrong to use nuclear weapons or to threaten to use them.

So how should we move forward? To exercise moral leadership in our world, the United States should repent of these crimes "against God and man." This begins with an acknowledgment of wrongdoing and an apology to the Japanese people for targeting civilians with the intention of driving Japanese leaders "into submission." Pope John Paul II modeled this type of moral leadership, frequently confessing historical sins of the church and asking for forgiveness. His actions are worthy of emulation.

Repentance also involves a firm commitment to restore justice. The United States must renew its commitment to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and move toward complete nuclear disarmament. Famous cold warriors like George P. Shultz and Henry A. Kissinger, among others, have also endorsed the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Open Sesame

"What's the password?" The question has a long and colorful history. It conjures up stealthy messengers approaching castle doors bearing notes from kings. Or it brings to mind the deserts of Arabia as a thin-lined camel caravan crosses beneath the blazing sun, with sultans and harems, and genies in their silks and turbans bursting from burnished golden lamps. One can still see, as if real, an impassable door to a forbidden place as it magically swings open when the correct password is uttered: "Abracadabra." Whoof! It is the stuff of children's games and fairy tales. Or at least it was.

Today it is the stuff of technocriminals on the Internet, a new underworld where identity thieves play a high-stakes game for real, stealing passwords to enter the secret passageways that lead to the stash: personal financial data. Every individual and business with such information online is vulnerable. And as for policing cyberspace, it is as vast as it is virtual. We have now become characters in a tale of our own imagining. Patching the holes in the Internet, like a cosmic tent overhead, a strategy security experts at Microsoft have been urging businesses to implement, will soon become a common, added cost of doing business online. Fortunately, lawmakers and security experts are on the scene as the new castle guards, whose vigilance is key to a happy ending. For now, though, attempts at online thievery will persist, at least as long as the password remains the point of entry.

Iran and the Bomb

THE BRINKSMANSHIP between the West and Iran over that country's nuclear ambitions appeared to enter a new and dangerous phase earlier this month, when the Iranians did not accept the West's latest offer to set aside further economic sanctions if the Iranians immediately stopped enriching uranium. Representatives of six Western nations had given Iran until Aug. 2 to reply to their offer. Iran allowed the deadline to pass, then responded 48 hours later with little that was new. In the interim it deployed a new long-range weapon it said was capable of striking U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf. In return, the United States and its allies have said that they will pursue additional economic sanctions. Meanwhile, Israel, which fears that a nuclear Iran would wipe Israel off the map, continues to prepare its Defense Forces for a strike against the Iranian nuclear facilities.

Such an attack would be a catastrophe. Among other things, it is impractical, as an attack would likely only delay the Iranians, not stop them. The principal elements of Iran's nuclear program are spread out among numerous locations and population centers, decreasing the likelihood that an Israeli strike would eliminate the nuclear threat and increasing the likelihood of Iranian civilian casualties. Also, an Israeli attack would invigorate Iranian nationalism, silence the moderate voices in Iranian politics and rally support for the Tehran regime. Lastly, Iran would almost certainly retaliate by striking targets in Israel and U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan and possibly by blockading the Strait of Hormuz, choking off the world's oil supply. The Bush administration should make it clear to Israel that a military strike would be a perilous and unacceptable escalation.

Vigorous and inventive diplomacy is the best means of escape from the impasse. Additional economic sanctions may be effective, but only as part of a comprehensive diplomatic strategy. The good news is that the Bush administration, its foreign policy long held hostage by ideology, has at last adopted a more realistic approach. It wisely chose in July to send the State Department's third-highest ranking official to Geneva for the first official face-to-face talks between the United States and Iran since the Carter administration. There are also reports that the State Department may open an interest section in Tehran, a first step on the long road to full diplomatic relations.

While these are encouraging signs, they are not enough. The Iranians are playing for time and perhaps awaiting the new U.S. president, who might make a better offer. Yet Israeli intelligence, sometimes more reliable than the C.I.A., estimates that Iran could make weapons-grade materials by 2010. The West, therefore, must act now; but first it must recognize that the invective emanating from Tehran is largely for Iranian domestic consumption or is intended to maximize its bargaining position. Most analysts, recognizing that this type of political posturing is Iran's diplomatic modus operandi, believe that a deal is still possible. What the Iranians want more than anything else is respect and recognition of their national sovereignty and standing in the world. This means that any accommodation between the West and Iran will likely have to include a security guarantee—a promise that the West will not seek regime change in Tehran. Though such a guarantee is unpalatable given the regime's human rights abuses and history of violence, it may be required to keep Iran nuclear-free.

ANY EFFECTIVE DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY will also include Iran's neighbors. The upcoming visit of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Turkey, for example, is an opportunity to explore the possibility of Turkish mediation. Turkey, a majority Muslim state with a secular government that straddles Europe and the Middle East, may be the one government that has enough credibility with all the major parties to help effect a settlement. Turkey could also move quickly, insisting on direct negotiations without preconditions, a proposal more likely to be accepted by the parties if made by an intermediary.

Despite the political posturing and distant drumbeats for war from extremists in Tehran and even a few in Washington, a diplomatic settlement is still possible. It will require concessions from all sides. The West may need to abandon its zero-tolerance for uranium enrichment in favor of allowing the Iranians to enrich for peaceful purposes, governed by the requirements of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Ultimately, a settlement will also require the United States and its allies to commit themselves to rebuilding the nuclear nonproliferation regime, starting with the substantial reduction and eventual elimination of their own nuclear arsenals. Without such a commitment, the West will lack any credible claim to moral leadership in the cause of nuclear nonproliferation.

Anglican Archbishop Calls for Mutual Responsibility

The spiritual head of the worldwide Anglican Communion, Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury, called for moratoriums on the blessing of same-sex unions, the ordination of openly gay people and naming bishops for disgruntled Anglicans in other church jurisdictions. "I hope that a little more mutual responsibility and accountability, a bit more willingness to walk in step will make us more like a church" rather than a loose collection of nation-based Christian communities, the Archbishop said. The archbishop spoke on Aug. 3 at the end of the Lambeth Conference, a 19-day meeting of Anglican bishops from around the world. Some 200 bishops declined their invitations to participate because of the presence of bishops from North America, where some dioceses bless same-sex unions and where an openly non-celibate gay priest was ordained a bishop.



Cardinal Walter Kasper, left, walks with Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury July 29 during the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England.

Kasper Encourages Deliberations

In a related development, Cardinal Walter Kasper, the president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity told a convocation held

at the University of Kent, near Canterbury, on July 30 that the Anglican Communion needs to find a way to affirm the dignity of all people and encourage the active role of women in the church while remaining faithful to the Christian tradition and Scriptures. Offering "Roman Catholic Reflections on the Anglican Communion," the cardinal told the bishops he spoke "as a friend," representing a church committed to dialogue with Anglicans and praying that the Anglican Communion does not split as a result of differences over ordaining women and over homosexuality. The ordination of women bishops, the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of an openly gay bishop in some Anglican provinces are seen as practices that will make Roman Catholic-Anglican unity impossible, in addition to straining relations among Anglicans.

Hope for Zimbabwe Power-Sharing Deal

Church leaders expressed cautious hope over a deal signed by Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai that lays the framework for negotiations aimed at forming a power-sharing government. "The immediate expectation is that it will bring an end to the violence," said the Rev. Frederick Chiromba, secretary general of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, in a telephone interview from the capital, Harare, on July 22. "Once peace has been established, meaningful dialogue can take place," Father Chiromba told Catholic News Service, noting that the "parties need to enter into dialogue in good faith" and to not revert to violence "if things don't go their way." Human rights groups said opposition supporters have been the targets of brutal state-sponsored violence since March, leaving more than 80 dead and 200,000 displaced. The preliminary agreement, mediated by South Africa's President

Thabo Mbeki, was signed July 21. It sets a two-week deadline for the government and two factions of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change to discuss issues, including a unity government and how to hold new elections.

Paraguayan Bishop Laicized after Election

The Vatican has laicized a bishop who has been elected president of Paraguay. This allows him to take office in August without violating church law, said the papal nuncio to Paraguay. "The pope has granted him the loss of his clerical status.... He's a layman now," said Archbishop Orlando Antonini, the papal nuncio, at a press conference July 30. Fernando Lugo, who became known as "the bishop of the poor," was elected president of Paraguay April 20 after campaigning against corruption and for greater equality for the country's indigenous people and poor peasant farmers. When Lugo takes office Aug. 15, he will end the more than 60-year rule of the

Colorado Party. "This is the first case within the church in which a bishop receives a dispensation," said Archbishop Antonini. "Yes, there have been many other priests the pope has left in the status of layman, but never a member of the hierarchy until today."

Liberian President Honors U.S. Nuns Killed in 1992

During ceremonies marking Liberia's Independence Day, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf honored five U.S. members of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ murdered in 1992 during the country's civil war. The five nuns, all natives of the state of Illinois, were named grand commanders in the Order of the Star of Africa for their sacrifice for Liberia and for their "invaluable services to education" in the country before the war began. The awards ceremony took place July 24 in Liberia's capital, Monrovia, according to the order's Rome offices. The order's Web site reports: "The exact circumstances

Immigration in U.S. at 'Dark Moment'



Ana Maria Hernandez-Alstrum of East Hartford, Conn., sings during opening Mass of the 2008 National Migration Conference in Washington on July 28.

Catholic Legal Immigration Network Marks 20 Years

Since at least as far back as the 1930s, the U.S. Catholic Church has been helping immigrants wade through the legal quagmires of immigration law. But it was not until the creation in 1988 of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, known as Clinic, that the church's role in providing legal services to immigrants was formalized and expanded nationwide. From 17 church-sponsored immigration service agencies around the country in 1988, Clinic has grown to 173 diocesan and other affiliated programs with 260 field offices in 48 states. Its affiliates employ about 1,200 attorneys and

paralegals and serve an estimated 600,000 people each year, Clinic's executive director, Don Kerwin, told Catholic News Service. Kerwin has been with Clinic since 1992, when he ran its political asylum program for Haitians. He became director in 1993. He listed more statistics that define Clinic's success: more than 1,000 training sessions have been conducted for attorneys and staff members, and more than 100,000 people who have been helped to become naturalized citizens.

Two Catholic cardinals called the current U.S. immigration situation "a terrible crisis" and "a dark moment in our nation's history" on July 28 at the opening Mass and plenary session of the 2008 National Migration Conference. Both Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington, and Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles urged participants to hold on to hope in their work with immigrants for local and national church agencies. The July 28-31 conference, attended by more than 850 people, was co-spon-

sored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Relief Services. Much of the agenda, built around the theme "Renewing Hope, Seeking Justice," reflected the struggles faced by those who work with immigrants. Workshops were scheduled on such topics as "How to respond to federal raids," "Identifying and supporting survivors of traumatic events," "A Catholic response to human trafficking" and "Parenting challenges from an African immigrant perspective."

of their deaths probably will never be known. It is believed that Sisters Barbara Ann Muttra and Mary Joel Kolmer were caught in the crossfire of an ambush as they drove one of their workers from Gardnersville to Barnersville on Oct. 20. Three days later soldiers of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia lined up Sisters Kathleen McGuire, Agnes Mueller and Shirley Kolmer in front of their convent in Gardnersville. The soldiers then murdered them in cold blood."

Vatican Paper Calls *Humanae Vitae* Farsighted

In the face of "disquieting developments in genetic engineering," Pope Paul VI's encyclical on human life and birth control was "lucid and farsighted," said Giovanni Maria Vian, editor of *L'Osservatore Romano*, in an editorial marking the 40th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* (*Of Human Life*). The encyclical "gave rise to unprecedented opposition within the church," which he said was due to many

factors, "from the complex cultural climate of those years to the enormous economic interests involved." Vian said the encyclical, which was "mocked as 'the encyclical on the pill,'" actually furthered the positive teaching on marriage developed by the Second Vatican Council. "But despite this, it was submerged in polemics," he wrote. The encyclical affirmed "the principle of respect for the laws of nature and for a conscientious and ethically responsible parenthood," he said. From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Chaldean Archbishop: Dialogue the Only Way

The Chaldean Catholic archbishop of Kirkuk, Iraq, said his city was calm a day after a suicide bombing left dozens dead, but he also said people in the area are forced to live with absolutely no idea of what the future holds. "I went on the radio and said that dialogue is the only way to resolve our problems," said Archbishop Louis Sako. "I wish people would listen; I wish they would listen to the voice of conscience."

Interviewed by telephone July 29, the archbishop said calm was restored to the city fairly quickly July 28 after a female suicide bomber blew herself up at a Kurdish political demonstration in Kirkuk. Archbishop Sako said demonstrators ran toward a center operated by ethnic Turkmen, who thought they were under attack and began firing.

Thirty-eight people were dead from the day's violence "and there are many injured," he said. The political situation in Kirkuk is in turmoil as ethnic Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen quarrel over sharing power in the government.

Pope Sends Greetings to China, Olympic Athletes

Pope Benedict XVI offered his best wishes to China, the International Olympic Committee and to all the athletes who will participate in the games in Beijing on Aug. 8 to 24. "I am happy to send the host country, the organizers and participants—especially the athletes—my cordial greeting with the hope that each one can give the best of his- or herself in the genuine Olympic spirit," the pope said Aug. 3. Beijing invited two Catholic bishops from outside the mainland—Coadjutor Bishop John Tong Hon of Hong Kong and Bishop Jose Lai Hung-seng of Macau—to the opening ceremony Aug. 8 but did not invite an official representative of the Holy See, reported the Asian church news agen-

cy UCA News. Pope Benedict spoke about the Olympics after reciting the mid-day Angelus prayer with about 9,000 people gathered in the square in front of the cathedral in Bressanone, where he is on vacation. The pope said he would be following the Olympic Games.

Paterson, N.J., chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, told Catholic News Service July 25. "It's a refinement of the language, a clearer theological language. "Not much of the people's part is changed, and I think

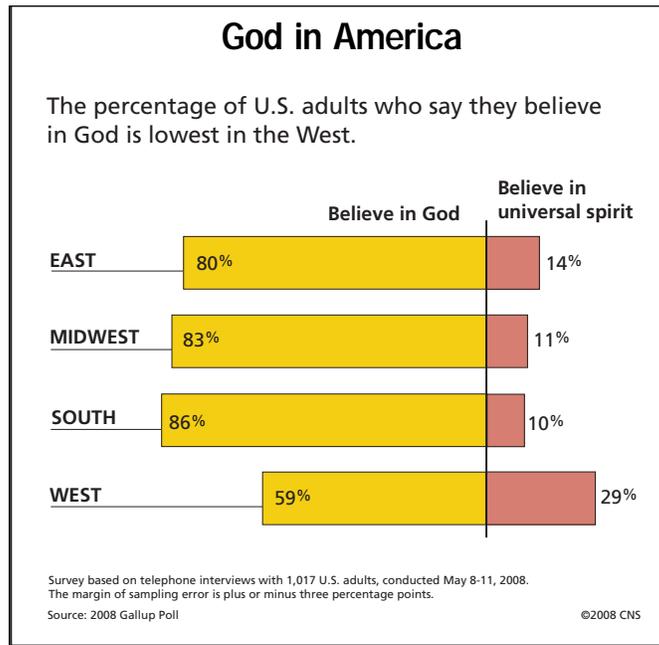
once or twice after they use it, they will hardly notice the change," he said. While the changes have been approved, Bishop Serratelli said it will be some time before they become part of regular worship at Mass. "I'm hoping for two years," he said. "I'm an optimist."

New General for Sulpicians

Ronald D. Witherup, S.S., elected July 11 as the 26th superior general of the Sulpicians, said his top priorities will be promoting unity, communicating the society's pedagogy and recruiting new members. He was elected by delegates from 11 countries

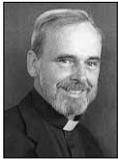
during a meeting near Paris. Bishops want "to keep their own priests because they all have needs in ministry," said Father Witherup, noting that priests must have the permission of their bishop to become Sulpicians. "So it's a challenge to recruit new members." Father Witherup most recently served for more than a decade as provincial of the religious community's Baltimore-based U.S. province.

Among their ministries in Baltimore, the Sulpicians operate St. Mary's Seminary and University. The Sulpicians, formally known as the Society of the Priests of St. Sulpice, are an international society of diocesan priests focused on the education and formation of priests and future priests. Worldwide, there are 320 Sulpicians, 71 of whom serve in the society's U.S. province. The priests minister in approximately 13 countries, with the society growing fastest in Africa and South America—areas where religious vocations are flourishing, Father Witherup said.



Vatican Approves New Mass Translations

The Vatican has given its approval to a new English-language translation of the main unchanging parts of the Mass, but Catholics in the pew are unlikely to see any of the approved changes at Masses for a while to allow for catechesis on the reasons for the revisions. The approved text, sent to the Vatican for *recognitio*, or confirmation, after a June 2006 vote by the U.S. bishops in Los Angeles, involves translation of the penitential rite, Gloria, Creed, eucharistic prayers, eucharistic acclamations, Our Father and other prayers and responses used daily. But it is only the first of 12 units into which the third edition of the Roman Missal has been divided for translation purposes. It includes most of the texts used in every celebration of Mass, including responses by the assembly. "In terms of the people's part, it's not going to require too much adjustment," Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli of



Dear Senator Obama

‘Our goal should be to make abortion less common.’

—Barack Obama

I AM WRITING THIS open letter to you, Senator, on the outside chance that one of your National Catholic Advisory Council members might read *America* and pass it on to you.

You have an abortion problem, especially with pro-life Catholics who would like to vote for you—something to keep in mind when you ponder the fact that there has been up to a 15 percent rise in Catholics voting Republican in the past two elections.

Catholic voters do not think monolithically. That should come as no surprise to you, since you have many Senate colleagues with a Catholic background who have supported every bill insuring a “woman’s right to choose.” But if you are interested in the respectful hearing of opposing positions, as you often note, it will be valuable for you to have serious conversations with groups like Democrats for Life of America and Feminists for Life.

There are some Catholics who will vote for you, hoping that your programs may do more for the unborn than rhetoric or a promise by Supreme Court nominees who would just return the decision to the states. They will vote for you, not because of your position on abortion, but despite it, realizing that your approach to wars of choice, capital punishment, hunger, homelessness, health care and refugees might better serve the lives of “the least” of our brothers and sisters.

There are some Catholics who will vote for you because your liberal agenda appeals to them and they refuse to vote for any Republican. There are other

Catholics who will never vote for you—a few because of the abortion issue alone, but many more because they are irreversibly Republican and distrust all Democratic policies. As one prominent pro-life Republican put it, he would have voted “holding his nose” for the pro-choice Rudolph W. Giuliani because of Giuliani’s other Republican positions.

There is a third group who are truly undecided or are tending away from you because they think you not only defend partial-birth abortion but also are against lifesaving therapy for newborns surviving an abortion attempt. You are going to be hit with ads about your vote in the Illinois State Legislature against the Induced Infant Liability Act.

I know you have tried to explain this in your *Relevant* magazine interview, but you seemed evasive. Can you just simply affirm your conviction that any newborn, even after an abortion attempt, should be given effective life-sustaining treatment? Perhaps your seeming ambivalence is related to your position on late-term abortions and partial-birth abortions. Second- and third-trimester abortions comprise a small percentage of all abortions, but they are horrific. Anybody who thinks not, does not think. But even your gentle qualification of the mental health exception was met with a storm of protest from the National Abortion Rights Action League, and you seemed to wilt.

I know you do not want to criminalize abortion, that you think it is a profound moral issue and that you think a father’s responsibility continues after conception, as you said on Father’s Day this year. I know also that you think our young ones should be taught more about the seriousness and sacredness of sexuality. But more is required if you are to reach

the group of Catholics (and other Christians) I have been talking about. Here are three suggestions:

1. Support the Rev. Jim Wallis’s “abortion-reduction agenda,” with its economic support for pregnant women and greater access to adoption as part of the Democratic platform.

2. If you are interested in diversity and mutual respect, give a place at the Democratic convention for Democrats for Life to show you are unafraid of difference and debate.

3. Engage the arguments and evidence offered in opposition to second- and third-trimester abortions. You may find that the position of most American men and women is quite different from Naral’s. The earlier stages of embryonic and fetal development are more contested. But even your Republican opponent supports embryonic stem cell research. Ask him, and all the Catholics who will vote for him, how this fits into their professed commitments.

Perhaps you owe some courageous people like Douglas Kmiec a bit of reciprocity. Kmiec, a pro-life Catholic law professor who served in the Reagan and Bush administrations, announced his support of you because of your approach to war, poverty and immigration. Because of this stand, he has been denied Communion at least once. Are you willing to risk excommunication from the church of Naral for a principled position on abortion?

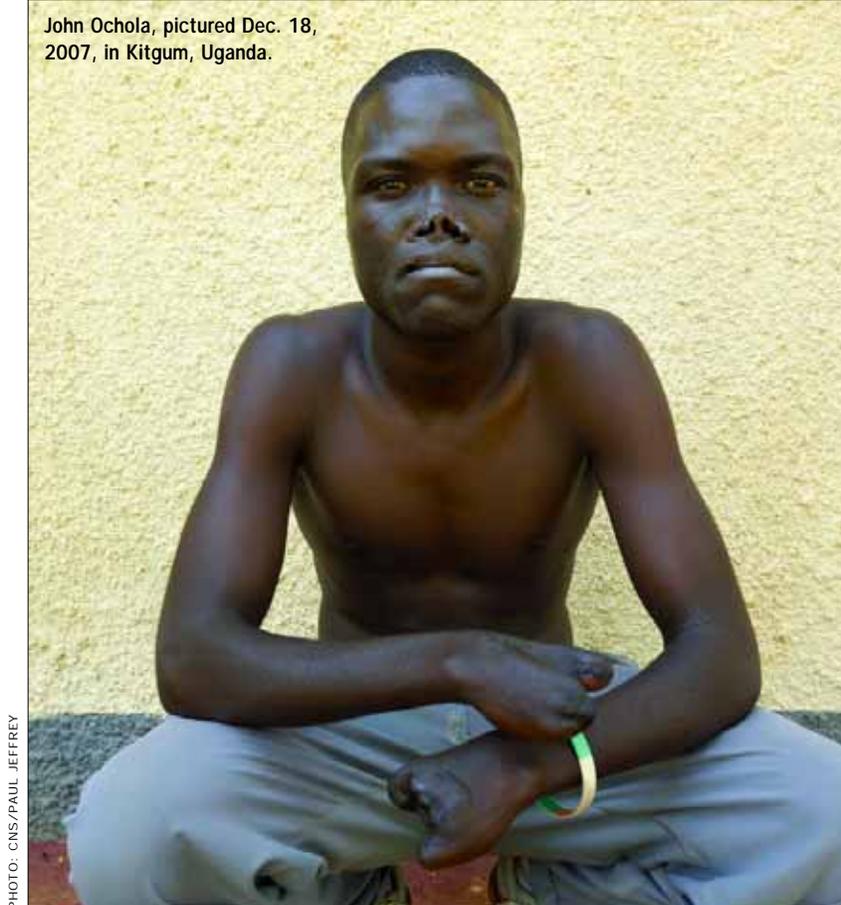
Maybe they will call you that terrible name “flip-flopper.” But remember this: anyone who refuses to change a judgment in the face of irrefutable data is either a fool or a toady. And you, clearly, are neither. As I see you move more and more to the middle in matters of the economy and the war in Afghanistan, I wait. Will you move a bit to the middle on this matter of abortion?

A voracious cadre in the Democratic Party has for too long wielded a dogmatic veto over any discussion of limiting abortions. With your commitment to reasoned, evidence-based and respectful discourse, are you able to challenge your party to welcome pro-life Catholics into its supposed big tent?

John F. Kavanaugh

JOHN F. KAVANAUGH, S.J., is a professor of philosophy at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.

John Ochola, pictured Dec. 18, 2007, in Kitgum, Uganda.



In the wake of violence, a campaign for forgiveness

Hope for Uganda

– BY PAUL JEFFREY –

‘I WAS ANGRY ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED to me and bitterly against any amnesty. But now I know we’ll never have peace if they don’t come out of the bush. And they won’t do that unless we forgive them. Holding a grudge in our hearts doesn’t get us peace. I’ve forgiven them and want them to come back and live in harmony.’ John Ochola, who spoke these words, has reason to be angry. He has no ears, nose or fingers, and part of his lips are missing—all cut off by soldiers of the Lord’s Resistance Army in 2003. The rebel soldiers later released him,

PAUL JEFFREY, a United Methodist missionary photojournalist who lives in Eugene, Ore., has covered issues of reconciliation in post-conflict situations for decades.

and Ochola spent seven months in a hospital. Today he is 24 and lives in Kitgum, a remote town in northern Uganda, where he, his wife and three children survive on food from the United Nations. A relative gave him some land, but Ochola has a hard time holding a hoe. At times his brother lends him a bicycle and he earns a few schillings pedaling passengers around town, the stumps of his hands somehow maintaining control of the handlebars. Most of the time he just waits for the war, a brutal conflict that has dragged on for more than two decades, to end.

Like Ochola, hundreds of thousands of others in northern Uganda have been damaged by the war between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. They are boys who became killers before puberty and girls who were abducted and turned into sex slaves for rebel commanders. They are some two million people who had to flee their homes to save their lives, who crowded into squalid camps where traditional family values have withered and H.I.V. runs rampant.

Some, like Ochola, are too weary to trust in justice any longer; they believe only forgiveness can bring an end to the fighting. Yet others in Uganda warn that only justice can lay a foundation for sustainable peace in the region. The tension between justice and forgiveness cuts through everything in northern Uganda these days, as the war is coming to an end. How it is finally resolved will determine the viability and longevity of any political agreement about peace.

The Lord's Resistance Army emerged in the aftermath of the 1986 overthrow of Uganda's President Tito Okello by forces from the south of the country. Okello was an ethnic Acholi, the predominant ethnic group in northern Uganda. Under British colonial rule, the Acholi had provided the country's soldiers and police. In the wake of Okello's overthrow, many feared the erosion of their power and supported the beginnings of a guerrilla war against the government.

That campaign, however, under the leadership of Joseph Kony, a spirit medium who wants a theocratic state in Uganda with the Ten Commandments as the ultimate law, soon became a war against the Acholi themselves. Most of Kony's soldiers, many of them children, were forcibly recruited from Acholi villages. The L.R.A. has a long track record of abuses, but those committing the abuse have been Acholi, from the same ethnic group as their victims. That moral ambiguity, in a situation in which kidnapped young people are both the perpetrators and victims of brutality, complicates discussions about how to end the conflict.

Debate About International Justice

Kony and four other Lord's Resistance Army leaders were indicted in 2005 by the International Criminal Court in The Hague and charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, rape, sexual slavery and forcing children to serve as combatants. The I.C.C. ordered the arrest of the L.R.A. leaders by area governments, but Kony vowed he would not surrender unless

The tension between justice and forgiveness cuts through everything in Northern Uganda these days.

granted immunity from prosecution. Peace talks mediated by the government of southern Sudan produced a cease-fire in 2006, beginning a process of gradual return for the internally displaced.

Hopes multiplied in February, when the peace talks produced an agreement about justice, including a provision that Kony and his cohorts, who have taken refuge in the jungles of neighboring countries, would be tried in special Ugandan courts in lieu of facing the I.C.C. Yet Kony has insisted that the I.C.C. indictments be dropped before he turns himself in. The Ugandan government says it wants to try Kony first, then deal with the I.C.C. indictments. The uncertainty was just enough of an excuse for Kony to walk away from talks, and by June he was reported to be forcibly recruiting soldiers again, this time threatening a region-wide fight.

While human rights activists in Europe and in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, champion the I.C.C. indictments, distance seems to matter. It is difficult to find support for the I.C.C. process in Acholiland, where few have escaped the suffering of the war.

"We're asking the international community to reconsider the I.C.C. stand, on the basis of forgiveness, for the sake of peace," says Matthew Ojara, a Catholic priest in Kitgum. He is a leader of the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative, a coalition of Christian, Muslim and traditional religious leaders from Acholi communities. The group formed in 1998 to push the principal actors in the conflict into ending the violence. Representing the group, Ojara has participated in consultations with the L.R.A. in Juba, the capital of south Sudan. He has paid a personal price for his activism; in 2004, he was arrested by Ugandan police and held for four days on charges of being a rebel collaborator.

Ojara argues that true peace cannot emerge solely from political negotiation. "We'll have peace in Uganda when

we're able to forgive from the heart. Peace won't come simply because the rebels return home," he has said. Kony has refused to acknowledge personal responsibility for any of the L.R.A.'s crimes, an omission that does not trouble religious leaders. "For true reconciliation to take place, one side eventually does need to say they're sorry. But forgiveness can be unilateral," Ojara argues.

A delegation of L.R.A. officials traveled throughout northern Uganda late last year, holding a series of consultations with local communities and offering what many who are tired of war claimed was an official apology. But not everyone was convinced. Cecilia Engole, a leader of Teso Women Peace Activists in the northeastern region of Katakwi, prefers that the top commanders of the L.R.A. be taken to the International Criminal Court because they have committed crimes against the people, including genocide. As she explains it: "We have mass graves, and those responsible for that violence should face the law. Some Ugandans are desperate and want peace at any cost. To get sustainable peace, however, we need to take the main perpetrators to the courts, so that others will learn from that and not go back to the bush." She adds: "If I were Kony, I would walk myself to the I.C.C. and say, 'Here I am,' because that's the safest place for him." If Kony were to turn himself in to Ugandans, he might be killed.

When word first broke of the I.C.C. indictments, some local news reports claimed that if Kony were arrested and taken to The Hague, he would have a comfortable cell with a television set. That did not go down well with families crammed into squalid camps, where for years children had to trek every evening into nearby cities to sleep, safe from the possibility of being abducted by the L.R.A. Another problem with the court's indictments is that they do not address the massive human rights violations by the Ugandan military in its campaign against the L.R.A. Aisulu Masykanova, a student at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, asks who should be prosecuted and under what rules. In her view: "The army says they won't subject themselves to the same mechanisms as the L.R.A. [President] Museveni has said they'll be dealt with under military law, but people don't believe that any soldiers will ever be tried for their violations. In the past, the government has dealt with soldiers who raped women in the camps by just moving them elsewhere. One side is facing justice now, but the other side isn't facing anything."

Traditional Justice: 'Mato Oput'

As an alternative to letting the International Criminal Court

try Kony, many Acholi favor using a traditional tribal form of justice, known as *mato oput*, which seeks the restoration of right relationships through truth-telling, accountability, forgiveness and reparations. *Mato oput* refers to a "bitter drink" that both parties drink; by this act, they bury the bitterness of the soured relations. Such justice often takes place in elaborate negotiations between clans—that of the offender and that of the victim.

Ojara sees this as a way forward: "We do not believe in punishment in the sense of imprisoning someone. Once reconciliation is done, you have to walk free and live with your brothers and sisters. There are no prison cells or house arrest. That's a Western practice." As Ojara puts it: "People who don't live here have a hard time understanding this, but they haven't been affected directly by the war. There comes a moment when you say enough is enough. We have to forgive and sit down together."

The February agreement on justice allows for limited use of traditional justice systems in deciding the fate of sol-

True peace cannot emerge solely from political negotiation.

diers in the Lord's Resistance Army. Yet some argue that such traditional processes are inadequate. "When our cultures were made, these atrocities didn't exist," said Engole. "Formal justice should be the order of the day. Where were these traditional mechanisms before, when the killing was going on?"

Reparations are also a traditional element of *mato oput*, but the L.R.A. does not have resources to compensate the families of tens of thousands of victims. Many women are also suspicious of traditional forms of reconciliation that often, as a way of bringing peace between two warring tribes, offered a woman to the other tribe as compensation for wrongdoing.

Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng, director of the Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange in Kampala, explained that women would accept the traditional mechanisms only if the perpetrators come themselves and say they are sorry. The women want to face those who mutilated and raped them. That would provide a start, but the next step in traditional justice systems usually involves compensation. If someone is killed, compensation might mean receiving seven cows for each person in the affected household. But since traditional mechanisms do not contemplate mutilation and gang-rape, today some other form of compensation may be required. If I was gang-raped and have problems

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with fistulas, maybe you owe me appropriate surgery. If I got H.I.V. as a result of being raped, then you have to deal with that. All this will cost millions and millions of dollars, according to Ochieng.

Church leaders admit that costs will be high and suggest that the international community must play a key role. The conflict grew from a humanitarian crisis the world long ignored. Investment in pacifying northern Uganda now could help tone down conflicts throughout the region, where wars from Darfur to the Congo increasingly take on international dimensions. As the debate about justice and forgiveness goes on, the displaced have begun to move from the giant camps into smaller transition settlements where they will prepare themselves to move all the way back home.

Corrina Akongo is one of a small number of the displaced who went home to her ancestral village last year. She arrived at Amuca in April 2007, just in time to clear decades of brush from her fields and plant some crops. In December, she harvested sweet potatoes from her own land. "It seems like forever that we've been waiting for peace," Ms. Akongo said. "I couldn't wait to get back home and start my life again."

John Ochola, pedaling passengers on his bicycle, sees *mato oput*, the way of forgiveness, as the only way to achieve peace and reconciliation. 

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A Church Reborn

Teens restore a beacon of faith for an ailing community.

BY BRYAN LINDENBERGER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRYAN LINDENBERGER



A DOG APPEARED AS THOUGH FROM NOWHERE. A robust, yellow mutt with amber eyes, he followed me around the old church I was photographing, stopping only to quench his thirst from the courtyard fountain. Hot in the New Mexico sun, he wagged his tail as water dripped from his jowls. As I petted him, I noticed a car backing out of a nearby garage. I tucked my camera away and hurried up the driveway. My mutt buddy followed. “Is this the official church dog?” I asked.

“I thought he was yours!” the driver laughed. A very tall man, he craned his neck from the car window to accommodate his stature. He had a quick smile and a rich, old-world Spanish accent. Grinning widely, he said, “Perhaps the dog is Catholic?”

The man was Miguel Macaya. Locals know him as Father Mike, pastor of Our Lady of Purification Church in Doña Ana, N.M. The National Trust for Historic

Preservation lists New Mexico’s earthen churches among the 11 most endangered places in the United States. Until recently Our Lady of Purification, or Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria, was no exception. Constructed in the mid-1800s, the vernacular adobe church rests at the heart of Doña Ana village, a largely impoverished farming community near the Mexican border. Doña Ana itself started as a simple campsite along the commercial road connecting Mexico City and Santa Fe.

Founded in 1842, Doña Ana bears the name of the pioneer woman and landowner who settled and probably died there in the late 1600s. Little is known about her, though local legends run the gamut of possibilities, describing both her kindness to strangers and her cruelty toward her workers. Our Lady of Purification Church became the first permanent building constructed on the site, preceded only by the “ditch project,” which transferred much-needed water from the Rio Grande into the arid, inhospitable valley.

Like the peaks and valleys of the region, the village’s long history has highs and lows. It was a thriving oasis and

BRYAN LINDENBERGER is a freelance writer living in Doña Ana County, N.M.

symbol of true ethnic and cultural diversity one decade, but in the next was plagued by war, hunger and Apache raids. The tide turned again (for the worse) by the mid-20th century, as Doña Ana became once again a small Hispanic-American farming community, with the church as one of the few reminders of its past. Even the dusty farms and pecan orchards could no longer sustain the small village. Wealthier inhabitants preferred to spend their dollars in neighboring Las Cruces, or even across the state border in El Paso, Tex. The town was dying. Graffiti soon darkened adobe exteriors as shops were boarded up and youth gangs controlled the streets. By the late 1980s, the future of Doña Ana appeared bleak. Our Lady of Purification stood above it all, but her walls were falling.

A Beacon of Hope

Mary Jane Garcia, a member of the New Mexico State Senate, remembers that her first legislative session in 1989 included a resolution to demolish the old church, which had been the site of her baptism and her first Communion. Her great-grandfather had stood among the original 14 families to found the village, making Garcia a fourth-generation inhabitant. She knows the area's past well and based her graduate thesis on the town's history. Yet to her, the church stands as a beacon for Doña Ana's future, not merely its past. "The church is the main focus of our community," she notes. "All else came out of it."

By 1990, drugs and gang violence had settled upon the town like a plague. The young men and women of the town needed work, but more than that they needed something to believe in. The Doña Ana Conservation Committee, together with Cornerstones Community Partnerships in Santa Fe, formed the Doña Ana Cultural Committee, which offered assistance for those preparing for a high school equivalency exam, professional training and an employment program for 40 of the community's most at-risk youths. Garcia hoped to do more than simply remove these young people from the streets; she also hoped to teach them something about their heritage and connect them to their community.

First, they would save the church.

Preserving a Heritage

Patrick Taylor, a specialist in adobe restoration, managed the project. Some walls were mended, others demolished.

The University of Arizona, the New Mexico Community Foundation and other organizations offered money, hands and expertise. Even the celebrated local artist Marcos Fajardo contributed his skills, carving by hand both the now prominent crucifix and the statue of St. Michael. After six arduous years, the restoration was complete.

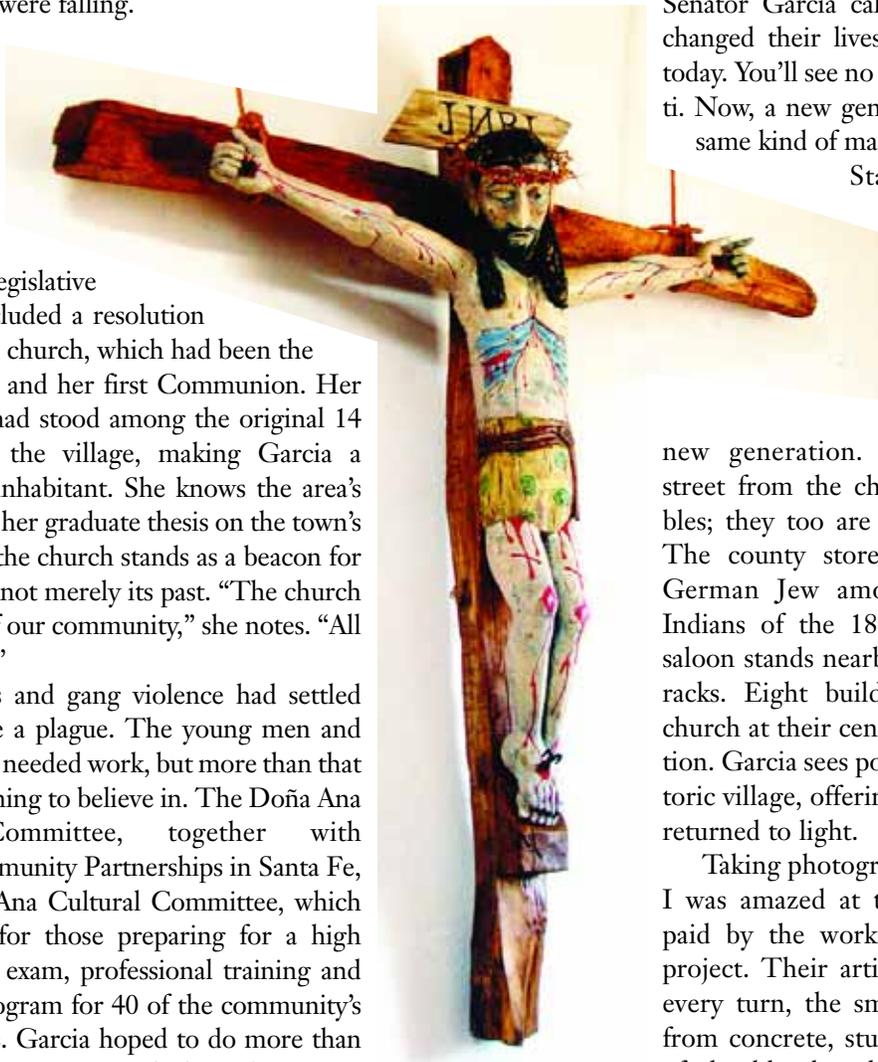
What about the community and the 40 youths who volunteered their time to make a better home for their family and friends? Only two of the young people fell by the wayside: one died in a drive-by shooting, and another was convicted of murder and sentenced to 50 years. But the other 38 young people saw the project through, a significant accomplishment in such a troubled community. "My boys,"

Senator Garcia calls them. "The project changed their lives. Look at that church today. You'll see no gangs, no sign of graffiti. Now, a new generation awaits with the same kind of manpower."

Standing outside the reconstituted church with its robust adobe walls, courtyard and statue of Doña Ana herself, one can see why Garcia wants to continue work with a

new generation. Buildings across the street from the church remain in shambles; they too are historical monuments. The county store, first operated by a German Jew among the Spanish and Indians of the 1850s, remains there. A saloon stands nearby, as does the old barracks. Eight buildings in all, with the church at their center, cry out for restoration. Garcia sees potential for a model historic village, offering glimpses of a history returned to light.

Taking photographs inside the church, I was amazed at the attention to detail paid by the workers of the restoration project. Their artistry shines through at every turn, the smell of history seeping from concrete, stucco and wood. I think of the blood and sweat that goes into working on such a place, knowing that eight buildings remain. These will require unrelenting hands and persistent wills, every bit as spirited as the pioneers who preceded them. 



View more pictures of the church's restoration at americamagazine.org/slideshow.

Why Some Look Up to Planets and Heroes

BY THOMAS MERTON

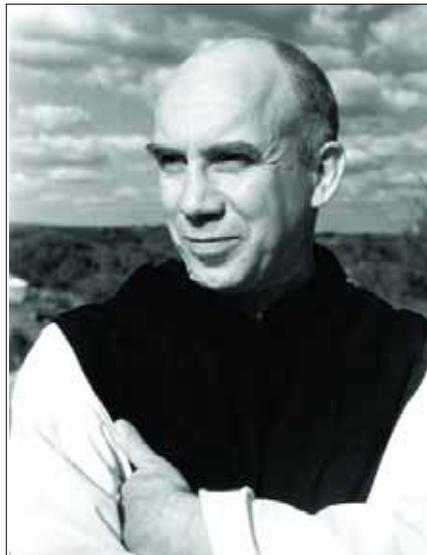
IN COMMENT: This poem is only a partial and ambivalent statement. It is generated by tensions and perplexities which call, perhaps, for mention, for they express themselves in a general air of disillusionment. But I am not disillusioned with the idea of space exploration as such. On the contrary, this fantastic endeavor seems to me, in spite of various abuses, to be, in the classical sense of the word, "magnificent." It is a noble, incomparably lavish expression of man's intelligence and his courage.

I do not regard the exploration of space in itself as a Promethean impiety: quite the contrary. It is something which man *should* do because he is the son of God and the master of God's creation. And if the space man is in all truth a sample of what the man of the future might turn out to be, then I think I like him. I find him admirable. By his patience, his humility, his courageous and simple ability to cooperate in infinitely tiresome programs, he is worthy to inherit the earth. Provided he does not forget there are other and deeper explorations to which he is called, with or without the encouragement of his society.

However, that is not what the poem is about. It has really nothing to do with the flesh-and-blood space men who have made the headlines, but about the headlines themselves. It is about the image, the fabricated illusion, the public and international daydream of space and space men. This is less magnificent. It is pitifully shallow, bedeviled with ambiguities and nonsense, a front for great crass power plays and Cold-War chicanery.

THOMAS MERTON (1915-68) was a Trappist monk of the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky and the author of numerous acclaimed works of spirituality, including *The Seven Storey Mountain*. He wrote this poem for the March 30, 1963 issue of *America*.

The poem is in a minor key because it takes account of this less charming aspect of the second most enormous and second most wasteful of our great international games. The best thing about this game, however, is that it does not threaten our survival. This, at least, can be said in its favor.



*Brooding and seated at the summit
Of a well-engineered explosion
He prepared his thoughts for fireflies and
warnings*

*Only a tourist only a shy American
Flung into public sky by an ingenious weapon
Prepared for every legend*

*His space once visited by apes and
Russians
No longer perfectly pure
Still proffered virginal joys and free rides
In his barrel of fun
A starspangled somersault
A sky-high Mother's Day*

Four times that day his sun would set

*Upon the casual rider
Streaking past the stars
At seventeen thousand miles per hour*

*Our winning Rover delighted
To remain hung up in cool hours and
long trips
Smiling and riding in eternal transports*

*Even where a dog died in a globe
And still comes round enclosed
In a heaven of Russian wires*

*Uncle stayed alive
Gone in a globe of light
Ripping around the pretty world of girls
and sights*

*"It will be fun," he thinks
"If by my cunning flight
The ignorant and Africans become
convinced"*

*Convinced of what? Nobody knows
And Major is far out
Four days ahead of his own news*

*Until at last the shy American smiles
Colliding once again with air fire and
lenses
To stand on noisy earth
And engineer consent*

*Consent to what? Nobody knows
What engine next will dig a moon
What costly uncles stand on Mars*

*What next device will fill the air with burning
dollars
Or else lay out the low down number of
some Day*

*What day? May we consent?
Consent to what? Nobody knows,
Yet the computers are convinced
Fed full of numbers by the True
Believers*

Mercy Toward Our Fathers

Difficult as it may be, forgiving priests guilty of abuse could be the key to healing.

BY CAMILLE D'ARIENZO

ON A FRIGID NIGHT last January, Joseph R. Maher, a successful businessman and president of Opus Bono Sacerdotii, spoke at a parish on Long Island in New York. Opus Bono's mission is to provide help for priests who have been expelled from ministry because of accusations of sexual abuse. In the audience were priests, abuse victims and members of Voice of the Faithful. Although the opening prayer called for healing and reconciliation, the tension in the room militated against both.

In his talk, Maher argued that a large number of accused priests are innocent and that, abandoned by bishops and laity, they are denied the resources to clear their names. He spoke also of the need to give culpable priests opportunities to reform and return to active ministry. And he said that many victims who claim abuse are merely seeking financial gain, and argued against the suspension of statutes of limitation in cases of sexual

molestation. Although every one of Maher's points had some validity, his failure to nuance them incited the audience. One after another, individuals came to the microphone to voice criticism of Maher's insensitivity. What began as a good-faith

CAMILLE D'ARIENZO, R.S.M., is a member of the Mid-Atlantic Community of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

attempt to bring together people concerned about both victims and accused priests concluded by exposing what one person in attendance termed "the still



open wound on the soul of the church." The discussion reached its nadir when one woman declared, "For such men no healing is possible."

What does such a statement imply about the power of Christ's redemptive love? Has the church, from top to bottom, determined that those who have sexually abused minors are outside of the circle of those whom God can forgive? Is there no grace left for them?

Healing the Wounded

Sexual abuse of minors is widespread; in addition to abuse by priests, many more have been abused by relatives and family friends. What healing can compassionate believers bring to the wounded?

Forgiveness, a key to healing, can be hard. Few betrayed and battered men and women can extend an easy absolution. Many find religious language offensive. For those whose anger and pain are still too overwhelming to consider forgiveness, a giant step might be, in the words of a therapist, to pray for the grace to want to forgive.

There is no question that victims must be appropriately cared for as long as they require it. Settlement money can buy helpful therapy. Systems must be put in place to deal with specific accusations, and all must remain vigilant to prevent today's children from suffering abuse. Yet while these practices have widespread support, there is little talk of forgiveness of the abuser as part of the formula that contributes to healing.

One hesitates to approach the suffering created by sexual molestation, especially by clergymen, as one hesitates upon entering a surgical ward. We dare not touch the pain. We choose, instead, to leave it to the professionals. Unfortunately, the professionals may not always provide wise counsel. Consider therapists who advise against broaching the topic of forgiveness for fear of increasing the victim's rage and impeding recovery, or attorneys who forbid contact with the victim because they do not

ART BY MICHAEL MCGRATH, O.S.F.S.

Art Auction for Charity at a Civil War Re-enactment

An important distinction is being deliberately blurred between original and print, gallantry and grasping, our attention called instead to the quality of the frame,

the careful double matting, and when the auctioneer is reminded that the first portrait is of Grant, he puts it aside, says, “we’ll save that for later” and gets a laugh,

for this is still, after all, the South, where later or sooner, everything comes back to loss. Even the far pasture, where re-enactors have parked campers and pickups,

was once fertilized with blood and shards of bone, and on bottomland along the creek, where they’ve pitched white canvas for a hospital tent, the sodden earth’s

been crossed and re-crossed by Confederate horsemen and by amateur historians with metal detectors, who keep hoping to locate something buried and unnamed

but settle instead for uniform buttons and tarnished silver coins. At the edge of a field by the port-a-johns and kudzu, there’s a table with cotton T-shirts,

replica swords and plastic pistols, but also a few genuine unearthings—an early version of a Gatling gun with a barrel that overheated, and a small cannon that once fired

canisters of grapeshot or else iron rough cylinders connected by short lengths of chain such as unruly slaves might wear. General Nathan Bedford Forrest is on the block now.

He’s sitting astride an enormous gray gelding on a hill above the rising smoke and carnage. Again and again, the gavel falls like a judgment—although, as reproductions go,

it’s really not that bad. One can almost hear groans from his shrapnel-ravaged company, and most bidders aren’t yet certain what kind of goods they’re being sold.

Michael Colonnese

MICHAEL COLONNESE directs the creative writing program at Methodist University, Fayetteville, N.C., where he serves as managing editor of Longleaf Press. This poem is one of three runners-up in the 2008 Foley Poetry Contest.

want to risk a lawsuit, or church leaders who fear any wrong step will trigger an explosive media blitz that will further diminish their effectiveness as witnesses to the Gospel.

In this atmosphere, especially when it includes episcopal cover-up, it is not surprising that victims are unwilling to forgive their abusers. Their resistance is understandable. This hurt is not abstract; it is wedded to anger and rooted in pain, injustice, abandonment and a sense of betrayal. Among its long-term damaging effects is the possibility that, if left to fester, it can become a debilitating way of life. To remain immersed in suffering is to extend its power, even drawing loved ones into the circle of pain. Tragically, the children of the abused can be infected by their parents’ anger and obsession, leading to their own loss of innocence.

The Hard Work of Forgiveness

Holding onto anger has been likened to taking a sip of poison every day—not enough to kill, but more than enough to debilitate. Certainly some time must pass before the palliative value of forgiveness can be raised. The question is, how much time? There is no single answer. For some, forgiveness is the work of a lifetime; others manage to forgive more quickly, helped by people with the requisite sensitivity and wisdom.

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, nor does it rule out punishment appropriate to criminal behavior. The Rev. Richard P. McBrien writes: “To be forgiven from a sin does not carry with it pardon for a crime or a guaranteed return to one’s former employment. A murderer who repents and confesses may be restored to the state of grace, but not to freedom.” Each murder case is judged in terms of mitigating factors, and different sentences are imposed.

Should we not also consider mitigating factors in cases of sexual abuse? Is it reasonable to exclude permanently all the guilty from ministry, to treat a one-time offender the same as a serial predator? Certainly some offenders need to be imprisoned or supervised so that they do not harm again. Some expelled priests find themselves pariahs, abandoned and isolated; in this state, a sense of despair may tempt them to seek victims again. Yet others, earnestly repentant, healed through therapy and support

systems, pose no further threat and hold a proven record of dedicated priestly service. Ought we to judge any human being by the worst thing he has done, as if it were the only thing he has done? Can any of us endure that scrutiny?

The late Rabbi Abraham Heschel said that while it is important to consider all sides of destructive and broken relationships, it is essential to include God's perspective as well. God's own relentless pursuit of each sinner and saint finds expression in the father of the prodigal son, or the lover in Francis Thompson's poem "The Hound of Heaven"; God longs only for the sinner's repentance and homecoming.

Looking to Maya Angelou

Persons sexually abused as children might take some direction from the poet Maya Angelou. She was raped when she was 7 years old. So brutal was the violation that she was hospitalized. From her bed of pain and shame she spoke the rapist's name. Arrested and released, he was later found kicked to death. Because she had uttered his name, the child blamed herself for her abuser's death. Like others before and after her, she felt culpable, if not for the rape, then for its consequences. As a result, she refused to speak for five years. In her self-imposed solitude she became an avid reader, drinking in the wisdom of the ages from Shakespeare to Langston Hughes. Sitting silently in church, she would concentrate on the inflections preachers used to convey their passion. When she was ready to resume speaking, she had much to say and the tools with which to say it. Since then, she has embraced this formula for self-healing: One who has suffered a great evil must name it, learn from it, forgive it and move forward with courage and focus on the future. Forgiveness had no power to change her past, but it had enormous power to mold her future.

Many years ago during a television show on evil, Bill Moyers said: "Victims of evil must cope with the ugly graffiti that is scribbled on the walls of their psyche. Can they forgive the evildoers? Should they?" An answer can be found in the wisdom of the Quakers, who remind us that "forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves." **A**



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By John Pfordresher
Paulist Press. 333p \$27.95 (paperback)
ISBN 9780809144532

Catholic studies programs are growing in popularity on Catholic campuses across the country, especially as a minor or part of a double major. They offer students the opportunity to round out and deepen their education through an understanding of Catholicism's interaction with the cultural roots of Western civilization. For Catholic students, it is another means of intellectual growth in their faith. This field is also one of the areas of expertise of John Pfordresher, a professor of English at Georgetown University.

While Pfordresher's book is ideal for classroom use (reasonably priced, attractive format, excellent organizational aids: summaries, index, study questions, illustrations and references to materials on the Web), it is also an engaging source for anyone who is curious about how "a Catholic way of imagining the world emerged in the arts of the West."

The title expresses the contents of the book's two unequal parts. Part I: Jesus and Imagination devotes five chapters to exploring how and why Jesus, who showed little or no interest in the arts but displayed a lively imagination in teaching, left a church credited through the ages with the creation and preservation of Western art. After explaining his use of the term *Catholic* ("an historically continuous community of Christian

believers...located in many places but...[sharing]...specific beliefs...ethical values...[and] liturgical practices"), the author cites four fundamentals that have profoundly influenced the Catholic imagination. These are the Incarnation, Redemption, Sacramentality and Community. He probes each of these for its implications for the Catholic imagination. Next, in the Gospels we hear Jesus, speaking in his Jewish voice, as "the poet of everyday life," offering parables, analogies and paradoxes that would feed the imaginations of his followers through the ages.

Part II: The Emergence of Catholic Art consists of seven chapters that cover artistic works from the first through the eighth centuries. The specific genres explored are: autobiography (from St. Paul's epistles); architecture and fresco painting (found in the house-church at Dura-Europus and the catacombs); poetry (the lyric poems of Prudentius and *The Utrecht Psalter*); illuminations (*The Book of Kells*); and epic narrative (*The Heliand*). Through these artistic creations, the church proclaimed and embodied its belief in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, its hope and trust in the redemption won through his death and resurrection and its Christian life formed and nurtured by sacramentality and lived in community.

Pfordresher writes in a style that is both clear and pleasing. His descriptions of the catacombs, poetry, paintings and illuminations demonstrate his own imaginative gifts. Nowhere is his creativity more evident than in his chapter on St. Paul, where he traces in Paul's epistles the theological basis for Paul's autobiographical narrative. Under Pfordresher's careful tutoring, we see that Paul's boldness in urging others to imitate him (Phil 3:17) is an example of the Catholic understanding of the Incarnation ("It is Christ who lives in me"). By dili-

gently probing the epistles, Pfordresher offers us a picture of Paul that points up both his importance to the early church and his later influence:

In the centuries ahead, Christianity, following Paul's lead, would initiate and foster the act and art of autobiography—the effort to discern and to find words to describe the evolution of the spiritual self—in classic works by people like Saint Augustine, Saint Teresa of Ávila, Dorothy Day, and Thomas Merton. These writers, steeped as they were in the Christian scriptures, thought, felt, and wrote within the Pauline way of imagining.

At the other end of the timeline covered in this book stands *The Heliand*, an epic poem that recounts the life of Jesus as a Saxon warrior-leader. (There are two complete copies of the original text of *The Heliand* on the Internet.) It is as if the poet took seriously Jesus' request that his hearers "suppose" their way into his parables. Throughout nearly 6,000 lines of alliterative verse, the poet speaks to his people—defeated by the Franks yet indebted to their conquerors for their Christian faith—the story of the birth, life, death and resurrection of this chieftain, whose humiliation brought their salvation. The poem is masterful in preserving orthodoxy

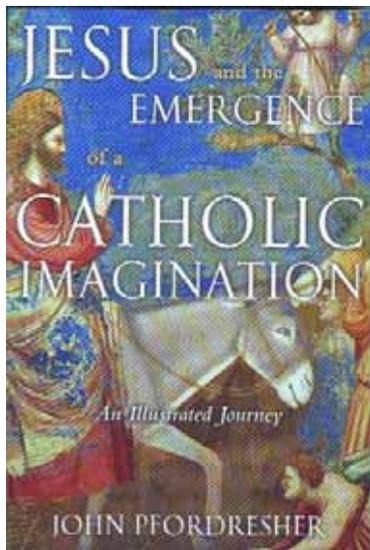
The Reviewers

Denise Lardner Carmody is Jesuit Community Professor of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University, in California, where she also served as provost.

Kevin P. Quinn, S.J., is executive director of the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education and a professor of law at Santa Clara University in California.

Scott Korb is the author, with Peter Bebergal, of *The Faith Between Us: A Jew and a Catholic Search for the Meaning of God* (Bloomsbury, 2007). His writing has appeared in Harper's, Commonweal and elsewhere.

Ron Hansen's novel *Exiles*, about Gerard Manley Hopkins and "The Wreck of the Deutschland," was published in May. He teaches at Santa Clara University in California.



while rooting the Scriptures firmly in the Germanic culture. Consider this excerpt from the Beatitudes, which are translated as the “Eight Good Fortunes”:

Then the Land’s Herdsman,
God’s own Son, sat down in front
of the men. He wanted with His
talk to teach the people many wise
sayings, how they could perform
the praise of God in this world-
kingdom. The holy Chieftain sat
there in silence and looked at
them for a long time with tender
feelings for them in His mind and
generosity toward them in His
heart.

No doubt discerning the signs of his times, the poet calls those fortunate “who live peacefully among the people and do not want to start any fights or court cases by their own actions, they will be called the Chieftain’s sons for He will be gracious to them.” Still, he recognizes that fighting men who want justice are fortunate too. These men “suffer more powerful men’s hatred and verbal abuse. To them is granted afterwards God’s meadow and spiritual life for eternal days—thus the end will never come to their beatific happiness.”

Pfordresher has shown us how the Catholic imagination first emerged. Now, like any good teacher, he pushes us to let our Catholic imaginations forge an orthodoxy both true and creative.

Denise Lardner Carmody

Bought and Sold

A Crime So Monstrous

Face-to-Face With Modern-Day Slavery

By E. Benjamin Skinner

Free Press. 352p \$26

ISBN 97807432900074

There is shocking news from the journalist E. Benjamin Skinner: slavery is very much alive in our day. A 1999 study estimated that there were then 27 million slaves worldwide. This claim motivated Skinner to infiltrate trafficking networks and slave trades in Godforsaken places and interview the slaves themselves and often

their traffickers. What he uncovered and presents here, in first-person narrative, is child slavery in Haiti, sex trafficking in Romania, debt bondage in India and forced domestic servitude in our own country. He need not exaggerate the heinous details of life as a modern-day slave; the agony that Skinner documents in stories of individual slaves is, if anything, understated here. But it loudly and appallingly speaks for itself.

There is, however, more to *A Crime So Monstrous* than tragic personal testimonies of modern-day slaves. It is also a sobering political tale about the contemporary abolitionist movement and its influence on America’s antislavery strategy, especially during the Bush administration. Strong personalities, fragile coalitions and quarrels over how to define slavery characterize Skinner’s narrative. Though several more familiar public figures have minor roles, the stars here are Michael Horowitz and John Miller. Described as a “hard-hitting neoconservative insider” from Washington’s Hudson Institute who had assembled a predominantly evangelical coalition with significant foreign policy clout, Horowitz recruited Republican lawmakers in the late 1990s to sponsor legislation on sex trafficking alone. Democrats protested and won the fight to use a more inclusive definition of human trafficking in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.

But this political battle raised a fundamental question: What is a slave? The various answers continue to muddle the debate over modern-day slavery. For Skinner, “a slave is someone who is forced to work, through fraud or threat of violence, for no pay beyond subsistence.” This definition seems reasonable. But few then, in 2000, or even now would agree with it. Horowitz and many conservative Christians persist in arguing that the only slaves are prostitutes, and all prostitutes are slaves; for them, organized commercial sex is the only form of human traffick-

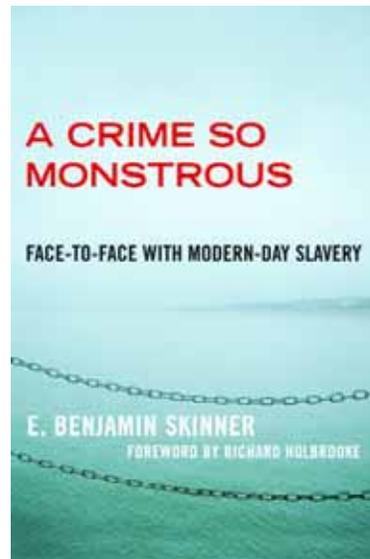
ing worthy of America’s attention.

In his day, John Miller disagreed with this cramped and circular logic. After serving as a moderate Republican representative from Washington for eight years, in 2003 Miller was appointed director of the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. As America’s “antislavery czar” for almost four years, he was the administration’s most passionate abolitionist, defining slavery broadly to include, for example, large-scale debt bondage in India.

That slavery survived in a free market democracy like India mattered little to State Department officials, and Miller’s battle to sanction India ultimately failed. This was a true measure of America’s abolitionist intent, and Miller soon resigned as a defeated and physically broken man.

Skinner sides with Miller in his broad understanding of slavery, and so laments the Bush administration’s gradual adoption of Horowitz’s “exclusive, hard-line prohibitionist focus on prostitution.” I agree with Skinner: this is a deeply flawed antislavery strategy that leaves too many modern-day slaves neglected. To make this point and to haunt us all, Skinner leaves the reader with a final slave story involving involuntary servitude in the United States.

The story is about Williathe Narcisse. After her mother died of AIDS in Haiti, Williathe became a child slave at age six in the house of a wealthy Port-au-Prince family. Three years later, a sister of the house mistress, an American citizen living in Miami, hired a human smuggler to bring Williathe into the United States. She entered the country through Miami International Airport. Since this was prior to both the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, customs officials did not give Williathe a second look. She was now a slave in greater Miami, living in a gated community of \$400,000 houses.



But this is not unusual. Skinner notes that “traffickers turn up to 17,500 humans into slaves on American soil each year.” Nor, tragically, is Williathe’s sad tale of physical abuse and violent rape unusual. What might give us some hope is her eventual rescue from slavery, largely facilitated by a phone friend to whom Williathe gradually revealed her dire situation, and her school principal, whose perseverance with initially unresponsive public authorities changed Williathe’s life. Still, this hope should be tempered; because slavery in the past was so hard to

prove, prosecutors often relied on companion charges to secure convictions. Here, the remaining female defendant who had not fled the country pled guilty in June 2004 to harboring an illegal alien.

Can’t the judicial system do better? With the 2000 T.V.P.A. in force, federal prosecutions of domestic slavery have increased dramatically, but “America has liberated less than 2 percent of its modern-day slaves.” This is sobering news.

In 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized a former slave, Josephine Bakhita (1869-1947). Born a Muslim in Sudan, she was

kidnapped into slavery as a young child, sold and resold in the markets of Khartoum, and eventually bought by the Italian consul there. While still a slave, though treated kindly by her owner, she was taken to Italy and was entrusted to the Canoissan Sisters in Venice. During her time with the Sisters she became a Catholic and decided to enter religious life. Because she had come of age, this decision, which Italian law validated, was honored; and she began 50 years of saintly religious life marked by humble and loving service. Mother Bakhita—whose name, given to her by kidnappers, means “fortunate one”—was indeed very fortunate. Less so were most of the slaves Skinner found in bondage on four continents.

While this book challenges us to get our hands dirty in pressing for comprehensive abolition of slavery, it may be good also to pray to St. Josephine to intercede for Sudan, our own country and the rest of the world where so much slavery still exists.

Kevin P. Quinn



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‘We Want to Live’

Say You’re One of Them

By Uwem Akpan

Little, Brown and Company. 368p \$23.99
ISBN 9780316113786

Three years ago, when the Nigerian-born Jesuit Uwem Akpan’s story “An Ex-Mas Feast” first appeared in *The New Yorker’s* Debut Fiction issue, deputy fiction editor Cressida Leyshon asked him about the stories that would comprise his still incomplete debut collection. Akpan, who was ordained a Jesuit in 2003 and received his M.F.A. from the University of Michigan in 2006, said: “I would like to see a book about how children are faring in these endless conflicts in Africa. The world is not looking. I think fiction allows us to sit for a while with people we would rather not meet.”



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His new book of stories, *Say You're One of Them*, offers us that look. From the opening scene, narrated from the perspective of an eight-year-old thief named Jigana, who introduces us to his sister, Maisha, a 12-year-old prostitute, it is quite clear that African children are not faring well. (All the stories are told from a child's perspective.) In effect, through these five stories, Akpan allows his readers not just to sit with the characters, but more. He desperately makes us want to step in and baby-sit for them. It is true that we would rather have not met them. We want to protect them in the absence of parents too poor, too drunk, too cruel or simply too sick; to defend them against those adults who would quell their children's hunger with *kabrie*, or shoe glue, before sniffing it themselves, or who would fatten them up and teach them to lie before selling them into a life of servitude; to rescue them from prostitution on the streets of Nairobi, Kenya, the sectarian violence between Christians and Muslims in Khamfi, Nigeria, or the tribal conflicts everywhere that divide families and lend the book its title. "When they ask you...say you're one of them, OK?" a Tutsi mother tells her daughter, Monique, in the collection's final story, "My Parents' Bedroom." "Who?" the girl asks. "Anybody," her mother replies.

Why? the reader thinks. *Why say you're one of them?* Monique narrates the answer, which might have come from the mouth of any of Akpan's children: "We want to live; we don't want to die," Monique concludes. "I must be strong." Sitting with them, the reader—like, it seems, the author—wants to keep the kids from death. So we read slowly, knowing that new violence, starvation and murder might follow on every page. Death is all around, often, though not always, mercifully just out of view. And all these children want is to live.

In *Say You're One of Them*, being strong enough to live usually means running away: slipping away through a win-

dow, hiding among a group of other retreating children, scaling a road divider, lying to conceal your identity and, most difficult yet so common, leaving someone else, usually another child, behind. The lucky children disappear, leaving unlucky ones behind. The even unluckier ones, together with so many unlucky adults, are made to disappear.

Of Akpan's five stories, the first, "An Ex-Mas Feast," told by Jigana about his thieving, glue-sniffing family and their dependence on Maisha, the prostitute, remains the standout of the collection. "Fattening for Gabon," a story describing in detail the fate of two young AIDS orphans whose uncle plans to sell them into slavery for a Nanfang motorbike, makes explicit the central problem of the book. No matter how fast they run, these children cannot escape the influence of the adults around them. Says the 10-year-old narrator Kotchikpa near the end of the story: "I felt I had learned evil from them. I had learned to smile and be angry at the same time." "Luxurious Hearses," the third of Akpan's three long stories, has a young Muslim, Jubril, board a "Luxurious Bus" full of Catholics and say he's one of them in order to escape religious riots in his "multiethnic, multireligious" Khamfi, a town quickly becoming "the corpse capital of the world."

In terms of dead bodies, "Luxurious Hearses" is undoubtedly the most gruesome of the stories, and so the hardest to look at. Of the three long pieces, it is also the slowest and least subtle. (While no less well written and no less tragic, Akpan's two shorter stories, "What Language Is That?" and "My Parents' Bedroom," get lost in this slightly unbalanced collection.) Waiting for his bus to depart—a process that takes far too long; the reader, like the young Muslim, wonders well over halfway through the long story "when the driver would wake up so they could begin their journey"—Jubril recalls the riots that sent him running. Hiding out under the pro-

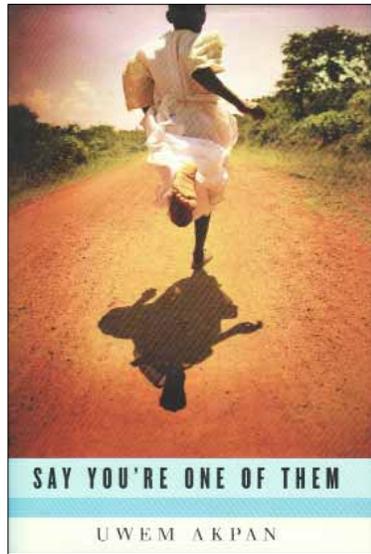
tection of a self-proclaimed "serious Muslim" teacher, Mallam Abdullahi, who had in the past harbored Christians, Jubril worries he will be given up when a mob of fellow Muslims approaches the house looking for traitors. From Jubril's hideout, the action outside "sounded like a play, and he waited for him [Abdullahi] to crack under the pressure." We know that he does not, nor do his children, which allows him, "filled with thanksgiving, with a mysterious pride that his fellow Muslims could risk everything for infidels," to escape the craziness of Muslims attacking Muslims and board the bus in the first place. There he waits.

Like the scene Jubril imagines from under cover, though, "Luxurious Hearses" itself often sounds like a play, and the reader worries, and waits, for it to crack under the pressure. And crack it occasionally does, especially when its sometimes pat conclusions are contrasted with the more complicated lessons about the relationship between anger and evil from "Fattening for Gabon." At one point, pocketing the telltale stump of a wrist that remains after having his hand cut—a Muslim punishment for theft—Jubril thinks: "It was time to be a human being and to celebrate that. What mattered was how to get people to lay down their weapons and biases, how to live together." How is it, the reader asks, that the 10-year-old Kotchikpa could see his world more clearly than the 16-year-old Jubril?

Asked to look, when we do we cannot help but feel bad for these children of Africa. We want to care for them. Yet there is no moralizing in *Say You're One of Them*. For Akpan, religion offers no simple solutions and, while playing its role in "all the stupid wars on the African continent," has proven to do more harm than good. Still, God is never the problem and never to blame. Akpan hopes, in fact, that despite all our human frailty—his own, no doubt, included—God's compassion can be revealed "in the faces of the people" he writes about. And it is. Which is why, page after terrible page, we continue to sit with them. Until, time and time again, they run.

Akpan understands, of course, that God's compassion alone goes only so far. It is *our* compassion he's counting on to keep these children, who must be strong enough to run, from dying.

Scott Korb



A Crazy-Making Existence

A Step From Death

A Memoir

By Larry Woiwode
Counterpoint. 288p \$24
 ISBN 9781582433738

A Step From Death continues the meditative, autobiographical narrative whose first volume was *What I Think I Did*, with some origins also in Larry Woiwode's *Acts: A Writer's Reflections on the Church, Writing, and His Own Life*. In the non-chronological and scattered way of memory, all three books recount Larry Woiwode's story of starting out as an actor in New York City, where he became a lifelong friend of "Bob" DeNiro, then shifting to writing under the paternal guidance of William Maxwell, fiction editor at *The New Yorker*. Woiwode's wonderful first novel, *What I'm Going to Do, I Think*, won the William Faulkner Foundation Award for 1969 and was followed by a peripatetic, crazy-making existence as he labored obsessively over *Beyond*

the Bedroom Wall, a family saga that sold over two million copies and that some consider the great American novel. Eventually Woiwode gave up an English professor's job in Binghamton, N.Y., to try his hand at full-time writing, raising registered quarterhorses, and doing "peasant" chores on 160 isolated acres in the arid, high plains of his home state of North Dakota.

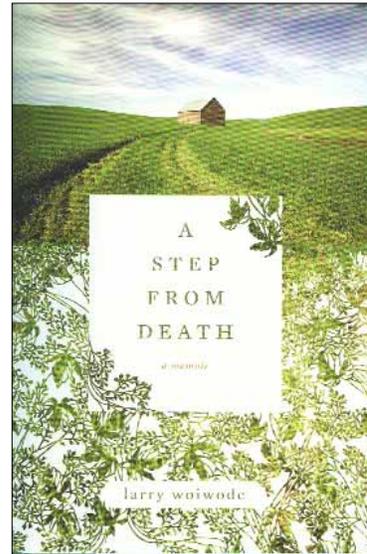
This memoir, though, is addressed to his only son, Joseph, an Army helicopter pilot in Iraq, and is inspired by a horrific accident that occurred while he was baling hay that almost cost Woiwode his life. His jacket sleeve was caught by a power take-off shaft spinning at 500 r.p.m. underneath the tractor seat. Yanked to the ground,

my chest felt as crushed as if the field itself had fallen on me, emptying my lungs, and my right arm, from armpit to elbow, was bound so tightly by the twistings of my jacket to the PTO shaft it felt like steel. I was half on my back, hanging by the arm, suspended between present death and a future where I was free. I can't say a presence appeared to provide the help I needed, but whatever is always present took on a sparkling intensity.

Ribs broken, ligaments torn, Woiwode got himself free after a lonely, desperate, agonizing, two-hour struggle during which he remembered how field mice sometimes died of sheer panic with only a forepaw caught in a trap.

Healing from his injuries allowed him many sleepless, pain-wracked hours for reflection and reconsideration, particularly of his own father, a noble widower and superintendent of a high school in Sykeston, N.D., whom Woiwode can finally admit he loves and admires and hopes he resembles.

Late in the book, Woiwode notes how



he watched his son Joseph walking their fields with his own boy, Timothy :

and the angle your arm takes to hold his raised hand trips my memory into an avalanche, and I'm displaced to the year we arrived, when the family would lie below the lilacs at the edge of the yard

on blankets your mother spread on the grass, inhaling a scent of chlorophyll and wool, and you would roll on your back and reach for the cumulus piled in an illusion of mountainous cascades overhead as if you could pluck down a cloud in your plump hand.

A Step From Death is full of such gorgeous poetic descriptions, the kind of passages that urge lingering; but the chaotic "avalanche" of memories can make it hard going for the reader, who is jerked from a scene with William Maxwell in the offices of *The New Yorker* to a decade later in North Dakota when Woiwode argues with the state for the right to homeschool his four children. The memoir cries out for photographs, but there are none, and even the help of a chronological listing of Woiwode's books is strangely missing. Only one date is specifically mentioned: Jan. 31, 1951, the day when the mother of the 9-year-old Larry died, a tragedy that haunts every moment in *Beyond the Bedroom Wall* and *The Neumiller Stories* and much of Woiwode's writing since.

Those objections aside, *A Step From Death* is a fascinatingly intimate memoir, peppered with gruff opinions and kitchen table reminiscence, but also full of wisdom, generosity, humility, love of wife and family and reverence for the earth. He hints in the memoir that he has several other books nearing completion, and I will be among the thousands who cannot wait to read them.

Ron Hansen

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Interested and qualified candidates are asked to submit electronically a letter of introduction, a résumé, a statement concerning the significance and importance of Catholic education for Pre-K-12 young women, as well as the names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of five professional references to Academy of the Holy Names, Campus President Search, Catholic School Management, Inc., Attn: Lois K. Draina, at office@catholicsschoolmgmt.com. Review of applications will begin Sept. 1, 2008, and continue until the position is filled.

HEAD OF SCHOOL. Marian High School, a vibrant and growing Catholic college preparatory secondary school for young women founded by the Servants of Mary and located in Omaha, Neb. (www.marianhighschool.net), is seeking a committed and visionary Head of School starting July

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Wickenden Associates is conducting the search for July of 2009. Call (609) 683-1355, or visit www.wickenden.com to request the complete position description and details of the application process. Application deadline: Sept. 5, 2008.

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Letters

Ministry at Home

The special issue on lay ministry (7/21) contained several interesting articles, but I was disappointed (though not surprised) that I found no reference to Catholic parenting as a lay ministry. I understand it is not recognized as such in any official document. Parents are neglected and taken for granted, even though the rite of infant baptism calls them “the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith.” Teach they do, by word, discipline and consistent witness of Christian values, responding to God’s call in the sacrament of matrimony. They need the support and encouragement of the church in their time-consuming and laborious task as parents in our modern age.

*Jim Scraeder, C.P.P.S.
Liberty, Mo.*

Remember the Artists

I think the effort to scan digitally all 100 years of **America** that Maurice Timothy Reidy mentioned (*Of Many Things, 7/7*) is a wonderful idea. At the same time, a little chiding: you did not mention if you would be digitizing the art, photographs and drawings that have appeared in the magazine over the years. Some very fine American artists practically donated their talent to illustrating some of these historic articles. I shall always remember John Hapgood’s evocative illustrations. These should not be lost or reduced to vague recollections.

*Mary Keelan
Millbrook, N.Y.*

Editor’s note: The PDF file format mentioned in the column includes graphics.

Good Habits

I would like to respond to the letter (5/26) criticizing **America** on the use of a photo of religious sisters in full religious habit (5/12): How sad that for some, a religious habit continues to be a polarizing, divisive item, even in 2008! On the

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contrary, all professed religious of the church, of whatever “political” persuasion, deserve our courtesy, love and support—habit or regular dress notwithstanding. People who do not grasp this basic truth will not “produce much fruit,” as the Gospels would say.

The author hypothesizes about the magazine’s motivation in selecting this photo for publication; perhaps the editors simply wanted to acknowledge an element of religious life that is out there, and also growing—attracting young people in our day and age. Rather than being “insulting” or “ominous,” I would describe it as newsworthy.

*(Rev.) Joseph Devine
Hartford, Conn.*

Jesus in Starbucks?

Margaret Silf writes in “Mind Where You Go” (7/7) that her “guess is that if Jesus were walking our sidewalks today, he would walk right past the fast-food outlets” and head for a coffee shop. I’m not so sure. A little red flag goes up in my sensibilities whenever I notice myself being pretty certain that Jesus would probably spend his time these days in the places where I prefer to spend my time. Maybe, maybe not.

*Nick Battaglia
Park Forest, Ill.*

Taking Exception

In “Human Dignity and the End of Life” (8/4), Cardinal Justin F. Rigali and Bishop William E. Lori overlook an important legal and moral exception to the obligatory use of medically assisted nutrition and hydration. If the patient beforehand or the proxy for an unconscious patient determines that such a procedure offers no hope of benefit or imposes an excessive burden, the assisted hydration and nutrition may be abandoned. No other person has the legal or moral right to make that judgment—certainly not the local diocesan bishop.

*Robert M. Rowden, M.D.
San Rafael, Calif.*

Open Invitation

I found “Religious Life in the Age of Facebook,” by Richard G. Malloy, S.J. (7/7), to be right on. As a vocation director working with young adult Catholics and college students, I am inspired by their eagerness to serve and to ask the hard questions and by their openness to considering religious life.

They often have not had much real-life engagement with sisters, brothers and priests. We need to continue to invite them into our homes, listen to them and mostly let them get to know who and

without guile



“The DNA tests are conclusive: you’re an Aries, not a Sagittarius.”

CARTOON BY PAT BYRNES

Peter the Rock

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time (A), Aug. 24, 2008

Readings: Is 22:19-23; Ps 138:1-3, 6, 8; Rom 11:33-36; Mt 16:13-20

“You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church” (Mt 16:18)

FOR MANY YEARS the Prudential Insurance Company of America has used as its logo a sketch of the Rock of Gibraltar. The image conveys stability, strength and permanence. It suggests that the company will be around for a long time and that its clients can rely on its promises.

Today’s reading from Matthew 16 identifies Simon Peter as the rock upon which Christ’s church is to be built. The image appears in a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. When Jesus asks, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” the disciples give various answers. When he asks, “Who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answers, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” In turn Jesus declares Peter to be “blessed” for having recognized his true identity and attributes this recognition to a divine revelation.

Then Jesus addresses Simon by what

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seems to have been the nickname “Peter” (*Cepha* in Aramaic and *Petros* in Greek, meaning “Rocky”) and promises to build his church on this “rock” (also *ceph*a in Aramaic and *petra* in Greek), which will overcome all the evil forces arrayed against it. The idea is that the

Praying With Scripture

- What ironies are involved in Jesus’ calling Simon the “rock”?
- When and how did Peter become the rock on which the church is built?
- Read Paul’s allegory of the olive tree in Rom 11:17-24. How does it express Paul’s great discovery about God’s plan?

church built on Peter will be a place of stability, strength and permanence.

In many respects Peter was an unlikely symbol of stability. While he was one of the first disciples called and served as the spokesman for the group, Peter is also the exemplar of “little faith” in Matthew 14, will soon be called “Satan” by Jesus and will eventually deny Jesus three times. What apparently

would transform “Rocky” into “the Rock” was his encounter with the risen Jesus. That encounter made Peter into a fearless preacher of the Gospel and a martyr willing to die for his faith in Jesus. In light of the Easter event, then, Peter became an exemplar of the forgiven sinner and the rock on which Christ’s church will stand.

If God could make the impulsive, wavering Simon into Peter the rock of stability, then surely God can transform any of us. Peter’s startling transformation reminds us that the crucified and risen Jesus is the ultimate source of Christian hope, and that therefore there is hope for us all.

Today’s excerpt from Romans 11 is a joyous and celebratory prayer in its own right. In its New Testament context, it concludes Paul’s lengthy meditation on the mystery of Israel. It was Paul’s way of saying, “Now I understand it!” Paul had come to see that the acceptance of the Gospel about Jesus by Jews like himself fulfilled God’s promises about the remnant, and that its acceptance by Gentiles was evidence of God’s mercy. Paul was also convinced that in God’s own time and way non-Christian Israel still has a role in salvation history. Paul expressed his “eureka” experience in Rom 11:25-26: “a hardening has come upon Israel in part, until the full number of Gentiles comes in, and thus all Israel will be saved.” This was the insight that moved Paul to his exuberant affirmation of God’s mercy.

what we are about—the reign of God. Organizing a blog or getting on Facebook also can help to get into their world.

*Cathy Beckley, S.N.J.M.
Seattle, Wash.*

Worlds Apart

“Religious Life in the Age of Facebook” contains excellent insights into the church’s vocation crisis. As a 30-year-old diocesan priest ordained for just over a year, I have experienced many of the issues Malloy mentions. He is also right to notice the generation gap caused by technology. The fact that I have 247 Facebook friends and 821

songs on my iPod might not be too impressive by the standards of a typical 30-year-old, but they are signs that I live in the same cultural world as most college students and young adults to an extent that most priests don’t.

But Malloy seems to accept the views of those who say the church’s teaching on sexual issues is “narrow-minded and prejudiced” and that the refusal to ordain women “enshrines sexism as a practice supposedly instituted by Christ.” It doesn’t matter how well cultural differences are overcome or how successfully the generational technology gap is bridged by a diocese or

religious community if that group has compromised its Catholic identity. The only thing that is bringing young people into the priesthood and religious life is the full teaching of the Catholic Church.

*(Rev.) Ryan Larson
Naperville, Ill.*

Numbers Do Not Lie

In “Religious Life in the Age of Facebook,” the author asks why young men and women are not entering religious life today. He might instead have concentrated on where today’s vocations are flourishing. Right now, over

The Cross, Our Identity and Hope

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
(A), Aug. 31, 2008

Readings: Jer 20:7-9; Ps 63:2-6, 8-9; Rom 12:1-2; Mt 16:21-27

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me” (Mt 16:24)

THE CROSS is the central image or symbol of Christianity. It is common in churches and in other Christian institutions. Many Christians wear a cross around their neck or on their lapel as a badge that identifies them publicly as Christians. Some crosses are elaborate and expensive works of art, while others are very simple. The cross is our distinctive symbol of identity and hope.

At first glance the cross is a very peculiar symbol of identity and hope. In the Greco-Roman world in which Jesus lived and died, the cross was an instrument of great suffering and shame. Under the Romans, crucifixion was regarded as a terrible punishment visited upon rebels and slaves. One ancient writer called it the “cruellest punishment.” It was a public event, meant to deter possible troublemakers from rebellion or criminal behav-

ior. For people in Jesus’ time and place, crucifixion symbolized terror and shame, not identity and hope.

Peter’s immediate reaction to Jesus’ prophecy of his passion and death (“God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you”) reflects the horror with which crucifixion was regarded then. Peter had to learn that God’s way is not always our way, that in Jesus’ case (and sometimes in our case too) the way of the cross is God’s way and that the cross can be an image of identity and hope.

The startling transformation of the cross as a symbol came about through Jesus’ death and resurrection. We must remember always that the passion predictions in the Gospels are also resurrection

Praying With Scripture

- What thoughts and emotions does the symbol of the cross touch off in you?
- How do you understand freedom? Does it have any relation to the cross?
- Do you ever think about your entire life as an act of worship?

predictions: each one ends with a mention of Jesus’ resurrection. Nevertheless, without the cross there would be no resurrection. The cross as the central Christian symbol takes in the entire paschal mystery and issues in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus.

Jesus invites Peter (and us) into the paradoxical mystery of the cross. By plunging ourselves into Jesus’ death and



ART BY TAD DUNNE

resurrection through baptism, we find new life and freedom from the false masters who seek to rule over us and keep us enslaved. By taking up the cross along with Jesus, we too can conquer death and live in the kingdom of God. In this context the cross is the supreme symbol of Christian hope, because it points us forward to eternal life with God.

In Romans 12, as Paul introduces the “ethical” part of his letter, he sketches what the cross as the sign of Christian identity and hope should mean in the present. Paul first describes everyday Christian life as “a living sacrifice” and as “spiritual worship.” Using the language of material sacrifices present everywhere in the Greco-Roman world, Paul challenges Christians to make themselves living sacrifices and turn their entire life into an act of worship. Then he urges us to live in accord with the new identity we have received in baptism and to discern and carry out whatever is good, pleasing and perfect before God.

Daniel J. Harrington

32,000 people are employed and over 18,000 more are being trained in professional lay ministry. More than 10,000 Catholics are currently volunteering with member organizations of the Catholic Network of Volunteer Services; and the Catholic Worker, which is only one “lay apostolate” out of dozens, currently claims over 200 communities.

There is no vocation crisis in our church; our only crisis is in recognizing and acknowledging the vocations in front of us.

*Karen O'Brien
Clearwater, Fla.*

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